

**Proceedings From  
A FORUM AND CONSULTATION  
ON  
THE CHURCH AS PARTNER IN  
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**By**

**Theartrice Williams  
Senior Fellow**

**B. Bakama  
Research Assistant**

**Victoria L. Miller  
Editorial Consultant**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In November of 1990, the Fairness and Social Justice Project of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minnesota conducted a forum on "The Church as Partner in Community Economic Development."

### **Purpose**

The forum's purpose was to provide participants with an opportunity to explore the role of the church in economic development in Black communities, and to share the experiences of two organizations that had been part of a case study conducted in association with the Fairness and Social Justice Project's forum on "Venture Capital and Job Development Strategies for the Black Community," held at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin, in May of 1987.

The forum included presentations and discussion about these case studies, which focused on the Black Baptist Ministers Union/Community Development Corporation in Kansas City, Missouri, and the Lawndale Community Church in Chicago, Illinois. These case studies further explored the role of the church as a source of capital and community development activity in the Black community.

This Executive Summary presents the forum participants' most important insights about how churches can become successfully involved in community-based economic development in the Black community.

### **Participants**

The forum's 68 participants came from eight states, with slightly more than half representing churches and community-based organizations. Other participants included representatives from local governments, public agencies, academic institutions, foundations, small businesses, and other non-profit organizations.

### **Key Insights**

#### **The Church as a Partner**

Viable partnerships have two essential components: sharing power and sharing goals. The real power of these partnerships is created when the partners develop a mutually empowering and supportive relationship that is based on a clear, common vision of what the community wants to change and what it wants to become.

For this reason, the church's role in community economic development should vary depending on what is already going on in the community. Where there are other community groups already working to revitalize the community, the church should join those efforts. Where there isn't any community development going on, the church should take a leadership role in initiating community-based projects and building new partnerships.

As an institution, the church has a special role to play in community economic development. Economic development alone often fails to develop community unity or to empower the people who live there. Because of its deep ties to the community, and its role as a source of values and moral guidance, the church can fill a role that other institutions can't play by providing the unifying force, the inspiration, and the leadership to bring people together to raise or address issues, and to help them develop the political power and motivation to create lasting community change.

### The Church as a Resource

Churches have access to significant financial resources. Ninety percent of charitable giving today comes from individuals, and 80% of that goes to religious institutions.

Churches also have access to the human resources necessary for successful community development. They bring an established population base, an ability to attract additional participants, and the capacity to organize participants and put their skills to work. This includes ensuring that the community has a highly qualified executive director and other staff who have the technical skills to help the partnership achieve their shared vision.

### Community Empowerment

Economic development should be about transforming places and the lives of the people who live and work there. The most important difference between economic development and community-based development is the value placed on each individual and on the empowerment of the community. Community-based development is characterized by community controlled development for the benefit of the community, not the particular business or investor. In order for community development to reflect the needs of the community, it is necessary to create opportunities for community input, involvement, and ownership.

One of the most important things that happens when the community gets together to create community development is a sense of ownership and protectiveness -- an attitude that, "...this is ours; we protect it; we put money in there; we made it happen." For this reason, the community's share of the capital resources being put into a project is a critical issue. If the community doesn't put any money into a project, they don't own it, and they lose the opportunity to see what they can do, to take pride in their accomplishments, to see that they aren't helpless. To do this, it's essential for the community to have ownership and control over projects. Even the poorest communities can do that, with the assistance of their churches. And they can take those financial and human resources and leverage city and state resources with them.

Another way to empower communities and build partnerships is to make the community's will clear to institutions or political representatives whose support is needed, but who are reluctant to work with the community. One example is providing local banks with lists of church members holding accounts there. This can transform lenders' attitudes from one attitude of turning down a community's loan application to working with the community as a partner in community development projects.

Longer term leadership development is also a very important part of community economic development. Helping young people prepare for and get through college, and encouraging them to come back to the community to live and work after graduation, creates special role models for young people and builds a new generation of leadership in the community.

The church can also help empower the community by providing alternatives for young people and adults to do something besides being involved in crime. This may mean building a gym that is open to the community, or helping community members get jobs. Churches can also encourage everyone in the community to call the police when they see a crime happening, to support the development of block clubs by providing space for them to meet, and to host community forums on crime, drugs, and education.

### Sources of Funding

Funding is often available through foundations, and suburban churches who hear about what inner city churches are doing also may offer financial support. Rather than shying away from projects that have church involvement, secular foundations may be even more excited about a project because of the church's role.

Visible community involvement also provides a powerful incentive for funders to support a project. One project received \$150,000 in immediate funding that they had requested in \$50,000 increments over three years when the foundation's site visit found thirty of the community's high school students spending their spring break providing labor for the project.

It is also possible to do creative job development projects that cost very little or nothing to do by entering into partnerships with businesses that need services that the community has the skills, or can develop the skills, to provide.

### Types of Projects

Those involved in urban community-based development must address the decay of the urban infrastructure, including the destruction of employment and the alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, suicide, crime, and white flight that accompany high unemployment rates in poor and working class communities.

To do this kind of development, you need to have a critical mass that can create and control enough capital -- enough power -- to organize and sustain a long term redistribution or reorganization of wealth.

In urban community-based development, small projects frequently cannot have the impact that larger developments have, because the decay continues as one small business is developed or one home is built. Larger efforts rooted primarily in the church can be successful in organizing people and money around clear values and sustaining that effort over a long period of time.

The size of projects is also important in inspiring the community. One presenter asked, "What is the sense of ... telling people to fight for something when they know there is no chance that there is going to be any transformation? .... If people act and feel powerless, it's because we don't provide a large enough vision for them to risk and to act. If the vision is small, the claim of the people will be small. If the vision is larger, with the potential for them to own it and take a piece of it, then the possibilities are larger and the chances of success are great." Undertaking larger projects can increase the human and financial resource base, eliminating some obstacles.

A major problem in many cities is the lack of minority owned businesses, and the lack of support for the economy of the minority community. Black communities may wish to pool their communities' resources to create minority owned firms that can build the black economy.

Building middle income housing in low income communities can also be valuable, because a mixed income base helps create a self-sustaining cycle of economic development: middle income residents spend their incomes in the community, and help stop the flight of residents to the suburbs. This simultaneously addresses several problems of low income communities.



## **Barriers**

Churches need to think more cooperatively and less denominationally. Their participation is most effective when they work as partners, as catalysts for change for the good of the community, rather than for their own interests.

Churches engaging in community-based economic development must be prepared to cope with significant internal conflict between those who want to focus primarily on congregants' needs and those who wish to have a proactive, community-outreach oriented ministry. These conflicts can strengthen the church if they are dealt with openly, and in terms of developing a shared vision for the community.

It is also important to remember that churches are not always on the same timeline as community-based organizations or community development organizations (CDCs). In the process of forming effective partnerships, churches and CDCs will need to come to some consensus about how they can achieve their own missions within the context of their shared community-development goals.

## **BACKGROUND**

Beginning in 1987, the Fairness and Social Justice Project of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minnesota has conducted a forum and two case studies addressing community economic development and the role of the Black church in the Black community.

On May 3-5, 1987, the Project presented a forum on "Venture Capital and Job Development Strategies for the Black Community" at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin. The approximately 50 participants at this forum were "a diverse group of national and local representatives from business and industry, academia, churches, communities, public agencies, and foundations."<sup>1</sup> Forum participants included experts in neighborhood and community development, finance, venture capital, "religious and ethnic underpinnings of communities,"<sup>2</sup> economic development, and public policy analysis.

The forum's purpose was to create awareness of venture capital and job development strategies that could lead to increased economic development activity in the Black community. The forum focused on four major strategies: capital formation, new business development, job development, and promotion of public policies. The forum report made several recommendations and proposed a follow-up strategy. In addition, the report stated,

That knowledge which can be obtained from community resources and programs to accomplish economic development should be disseminated by a continuous, thorough, and broad base (across interest groups) communications effort. A variety of communications structures is needed, including frequent meetings, telephone calls, correspondence, newsletters, seminars, conferences and workshops.<sup>3</sup>

The forum report identified several strategies that could be more fully explored to stimulate capital formation and to increase Black wealth in the community, including the church.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. Williams, Theartrice, "Venture Capital and Job Development Strategies for the Black Community," A Report On A Policy Forum, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, November 1987, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>. Op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>. Op. cit. p. 7.

The forum report made the following statement about churches as a potential source of capital formation:

Since the Civil War Black churches have been a significant social dynamic in the community. Their positive effects through social action have enabled the Black family, the Black community and culture, and the Black individual to survive and succeed. The unique features that enabled churches to touch and hold together all segments of the community provide the lattice for an entrepreneurial foundation and structure. Black churches have a potential for reaching those who are open to entrepreneurial efforts and those who can be "converted" to this underutilized approach to individual and community wealth.<sup>5</sup>

As a first step toward implementation of the recommendations and proposed follow-up strategy developed through the "Venture Capital and Job Development Strategies for the Black Community" forum, the director of Fairness and Social Justice Project identified three sites for case studies of churches in Black communities. Case studies of the Black Baptist Ministers Union/Community Development Corporation of Kansas City, Missouri, and the Lawndale Community Church of Chicago were completed; the third, a large Black Baptist congregation in Kansas City Kansas is still in progress.

Case study findings on "The Church as Partner in Community Economic Development" were presented at a two-day forum and consultation held at the Humphrey Institute from November 15-17, 1990. Representatives from the case study sites made presentations and provided direct consultation to forum participants contemplating community/church program initiatives. In addition, forum participants shared information about other community economic development initiatives undertaken by churches and communities around the country.

The following report summarizes the proceedings and recommendations of the Fairness and Social Justice Project's forum on "The Church as Partner in Community Economic Development."

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<sup>5</sup> Op. cit., p.7.

## INTRODUCTION

The seventy participants in the Fairness and Social Justice Project's forum on "The Church as Partner in Community Economic Development" were from eight states, including Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas and Minnesota. Although most (55%) were representatives of churches and community-based organizations, forum participants also represented elected officials, public agencies, academic institutions, foundations, small businesses, and other non-profit organizations. Their areas of expertise included neighborhood and community economic development, finance, religion, education communications, and public policy analysis.

The objective of the forum was to share the experiences of the two case study sites, the Black Baptist Ministers Union/Community Development Corporation in Kansas City and the Lawndale Community Church in Chicago, with forum participants in order to stimulate awareness of and interest in the role that community-church partnerships can play in neighborhood revitalization. To achieve this objective, the forum included plenary sessions and small group discussions designed to facilitate a maximum exchange of information and to stimulate debate.

The plenary sessions consisted of the following: a keynote presentation on the "Church as Resource in the Revitalization of Communities" by Willis Bright of the Lilly Endowment; a dinner presentation on "religious Institutions as Co-developers for Economic Enterprise Initiatives" by Donald Maxwell, President, Community Development Corporation, Kansas City, Missouri; an interview of Reverend Wayne Gordon, pastor, Lawndale Community Church by Denise Johnson, journalist, St. Paul Pioneer Press, on "The Role of the Church in Community Development." Other plenary session presentations included a panel discussion of, "How Community and Church Can Be Good Partners in Community Revitalization." Panelists were Minneapolis City Council member Sandra Hilary, St. Paul developer, Victoria Davis, Reverend Wallace Hartfield, Kansas City, Missouri and Ralph Colby, Project for Pride in Living. Gerald Taylor of the Industrial Area Foundation made the final plenary session presentation on "Organizing Community and Church to Work Toward a Common Interest."

Small group discussions were also held to provide forum participants with an opportunity to discuss the forum presentations, and to share information about their own experiences with community-church partnerships.

The forum presentations and small group discussions focused on four topics:

- 1) The church as a source of capital and human resource in neighborhood revitalization;
- 2) Churches as co-developers or partners in development ventures;
- 3) Churches as initiators or lead developers in neighborhood ventures; and,
- 4) Churches as organizers or catalysts for major development activities.

## **PLENARY SESSION PRESENTATIONS**

This section represents the edited text of five presentations made at the forum. The presentations consist of the forum opening Keynote Address by Willis Bright, Program Officer for the Lilly Endowment, Indianapolis, Indiana. His presentation is followed by a dinner presentation from Donald Maxwell, President of the Community Development Corporation of Kansas City, Missouri. The third presentation is an interview of Reverend Wayne Gordon, Pastor, Lawndale Community Church, Chicago, Illinois conducted by Denise Johnson, Journalist, St. Paul Pioneer Press. This interview was conducted in plenary session before the forum audience. The fourth presentation was made by a panel consisting Sandra Hilary, Member Minneapolis City Council, Victoria Davis, President, BNV Properties, St. Paul, Minnesota, Reverend Wallace Hartfield, Past President, Black Baptist Ministers Union, Kansas City and Ralph Colby, Vice President, Project for Pride in Living, Minneapolis. The final presentation was given by Gerald Taylor, Organizer, Industrial Area Foundation, Memphis, Tennessee.

## CHURCH AS RESOURCE IN THE REVITALIZATION OF COMMUNITIES

By  
Willis Bright

### Charity vs Philanthropy

Charity is very important. It's been a foundation of human relationships since the inception of this country. Assisting individuals who are in need by giving them things to take care of their immediate situations, whether it's food or clothes, has been very much a part of the fabric of this country.

Charity has also been a part of the African American tradition and culture. A piece of that charity (tradition), or foundation, has been self-help.

Self-help has been a very positive force, a positive spirit in providing support to one's fellow person. It is also part of the foundation of our human service delivery system in this country. There are a range of self-help examples, whether it's farmers sharing responsibilities for doing work that an individual could not do, like building a barn, or a group of slaves and ex-slaves working together to create an underground railroad that allowed people to pass to freedom. The notion of self-help has been very much a part of the tradition of this country in terms of its sharing and its giving.

In contemporary times, the notion of charity has given way somewhat to a broader notion of philanthropy. Stan Katz, a historian, characterizes philanthropy as being different from charity. He defines charity as the giving of alms, the giving of gifts to take care of others. Philanthropy grants that charity is necessary but insufficient because of inadequate charitable resources to address all the human needs in the world. Hence the need for philanthropy. The idea of the original philanthropists (businessmen like Rockefeller and Carnegie) was to prevent a situation of need from happening.

Philanthropy accompanied the creation of the modern research university, because in creating the modern research university, a capacity was developed to begin to determine whether one's activities were in fact doing some good or having some impact. The original philanthropists also created foundations. The foundations helped define the parameters of what was to be done to alleviate certain kinds of conditions.

The situation has changed. Today private foundations and others make up only about 10% of the giving that is done. Ninety percent of the giving comes from individuals. The significant issue, especially for this occasion, is that 80% of that giving goes to religious institutions.

Alicia Byrd of the National Congress of Black Churches talks about traditional philanthropy in the African-American community. She defines it as donation of finances, goods, services, or volunteer time in order to improve the social and economic conditions of disadvantaged individuals and/or groups. This mutual aid involves sharing resources among members of a discrete group, or engaging in activities that also benefit others. So some of the current notions of philanthropy not only speak to the dollars that are involved, but also to people's time, energies, and participation in problem-solving.

The independent sector for several years has done a survey of giving and volunteerism. About 50% of households are actively involved in volunteering. Within the group of households that are contributing dollars for charitable purposes, the contribution is about 2% of family income. It's very interesting to note that among those households where there are people volunteering, the contribution is about 2.9% of family income going to charitable causes. The 1989 average for all families in terms of dollars given was \$734, compared to 1987, when it was \$562. It is worthwhile to know that, during times when there is a great deal of economic stress for some families, there is still charitable giving. Baby-boomers are donating time and money. In the 25 to 34 age group, about 62% are giving and volunteering compared to 45% eight years previous.

Although most of the giving goes to churches, givers expect their money to be directed towards certain categories of activities. Youth development leads the list in terms of donations. This can be seen in light of the problems of inner city communities and youth development as fundamental concerns of the society. The environment, health, and education are the other important areas.

### **African American Churches**

According to a report prepared about African American churches, their charitable activities are divided into the following categories:

- ◆ Direct relief, for example, handing out food through food closets, and clothing and dollars to help the needy pay the electric bill out of the Benevolence Fund of individual congregations;
- ◆ Services in counseling that helped the poor correct their own situations, for example, job training, child care, and health care; and,
- ◆ Economic and social advocacy, correcting imbalances in opportunity or resources as they affect poor people, generally by persuading public or private actors in the market to change their policies.

### Direct Relief

Churches are providing direct relief through the distribution of food and clothing, and many of them are providing supplements to public food assistance programs. The majority of child care in urban communities is being provided by church-based child care centers. Advocacy is now required in the area of child care regulations because these institutions have often not met public expectations for facilities for children. Another area of concern relates to the kind of curricula available from state and local departments and boards of education to assist church-based child care programs. The curricula often is not well suited for children and families of color. It often is insensitive and violates their cultural and ethnic identities.

### Counseling Services

In Chicago, a group of churches have put together a program called "Project Image," where they are involved in providing mentoring to young males, particularly African American males. Rather than trying to provide one-on-one mentoring relationships, they're doing it as groups. A group of men in a church, who might be centered around a particular activity (for example, computers or sports) mentor a group of young people who have some interest in that particular activity.

The people of Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., are not only providing some one-on-one counseling to young men, but also providing educational intervention, working with young men and their parents on how to approach public schools and how to deal with issues involving peer pressure around drugs and adolescent sex in their communities.

### Economic and Social Advocacy

The Catholic Bishops' Letter on the Economic Situation criticized the American economy for denying some individuals enough economic stability to live with some sense of dignity. William O'Hare, Director of Population and Policy Analysis at the University of Louisville, has looked at economic issues like labor force participation by urban males. O'Hare argues that the restructuring of the American economy has resulted in a decrease in participation of males in the labor force, and a decrease in mean earnings for all workers except those with more than four years of college.

The resulting decrease in mean earnings for males has severely impacted social and economic conditions in the African American community. This has also adversely affected the availability of affordable housing and jobs in housing or employment markets. Young men are also not marrying (an increase from 33% to 38%), and over half of the children in many urban poor communities are living in households headed by a female, often in poverty. Advocacy for economic restructuring includes activities that help alleviate poverty. For example, greater movement by churches into community economic development partnerships can help alleviate problems of poor housing and increase opportunities for community renewal.



## **Contributions Churches Can Make to Neighborhood Development**

Yvonne Delk, Executive Director of the Community Renewal Society, gives a rationale for why it is important for religious institutions to be involved in neighborhood development. They offer a vision of the world as God intends. Churches by their very nature embody a notion of how people should be treated and the quality of life that individuals should have, and thus kind of set a balance, an interdependence that is inherent in Christ's definition of what community is, and that justice that should exist in communities.

Churches also affirm the intrinsic work and sacredness of human beings by valuing the individual simply because of who he/she is. Churches can bring people together and keep them there like no other single organization. It is a little hard to walk away from God. It may be easier to walk away from a Citizen's League report.

Churches possess the free space to model community, rooted in wholeness and inclusiveness rather than brokenness and fragmentation. Church involvement provides opportunities to bring in all those who want to be a part of making a change. Finally, churches possess resources that are needed for the development of communities. Whether they are endowed or supported by individual givers, all churches do possess resources, not only in terms of dollars but also in terms of people's volunteer labor.

### **Lilly Endowment Project**

The Lilly Endowment is one of the few national foundations that has both community development and religion divisions. Several years ago, the vice presidents of these divisions decided it was time to provide an opportunity for more religious institutions and community development groups to try to come together to do projects. In launching this project, Robert Lynn, retired senior vice president for religion at Lilly Endowment stated that "The last institutions to abandon a dying neighborhood are the local church and corner liquor store."

With that as a backdrop, the Lilly Endowment set out to provide planning grants for a number of organizations to develop projects that met needs in their communities. Through a rather rigorous review process, 25 planning and 3 implementation grants were made.

What are some of the projects? What are they doing? The organizations are involved in housing, business development, and employment creation. The projects seek to employ individuals from the community. Some of the people you have heard today or will hear tomorrow are involved in similar kinds of activities. The major area of project involvement is housing.

It is important to understand the difference between economic development and community-based development. The guiding principle in community-based development is community control. Community economic development is development for the community, not solely for a particular business or outside investor.

To ensure that the development is, indeed, for the community, it must also be by the community, in the sense that it is governed, or should be governed, by community-based structures such as community development corporations and churches that invite or acquire representative community participation. Religious institutions have increased their involvement and they bring their participation in the community into those relationships.

What have we learned about the partnerships between religious institutions and their community counterparts that make working together possible? The partners must have a clear common vision. They have to agree about the conditions that they want to change. There has to be an effective empowering and mutually supporting relationship between the partners. That is, whether you're a church or whether you're a community, people want not only to change things in the community, eliminating blighted housing, but want one another to grow in the process, and want the community to grow. Sharing skills. Supporting each other. Working together, rather than a few taking the lead and excluding others. Responsibility is shared. Partners divide up tasks. The strengths of each partner are recognized and appreciated. An important thing is for partners to be able to attract a highly qualified executive director and other staff -- people who have the technical skills to enable the partnership to achieve their shared vision.

### Summary Observations

Charity and philanthropy are in the American tradition. Religious institutions have played an important role in enabling this nation to express its charitable commitments. For many years religious institutions were the principle charitable organizations in the country. Churches often provided direct relief of food, clothing and shelter to individuals and families. As needs of the people grew it became more obvious that the church could no longer be the principle charitable institution.

Philanthropy in many ways may be viewed as a more highly structured and organized form of charity. It resulted from the concentration of wealth in the hands of a relative few who believed it was important to give back to the community. Philanthropy provided a way for those with wealth to target and control their charitable giving. This kind of philanthropic giving gave birth to private foundations that serve as vehicles for targeted sharing of their wealth. The Lilly Endowment's Religious Institutions as Partners in Community-Based Development is an example of a philanthropic organization merging charity with philanthropy to better serve the community.

Although philanthropic organizations, such as foundations, are significant charitable donors, individual giving still represents, by far, the largest segment of charitable contributions. Religious institutions are the largest single recipient of donated funds, goods, and services.

**RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AS CO-DEVELOPERS FOR  
ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE**

**By  
Donald Maxwell**

I think it's great that you have this workshop where you talk about bringing communities together with churches. There is a wealth of resources available inside the church. There is a wealth of resources inside the community. The two are the same. The community attends the church; the church is the community. In the Linwood neighborhood in Kansas City, Missouri, we have demonstrated what can happen.

The Linwood neighborhood, where I have lived and worked all my life, has gone through some depressing times. Now we're in the process of rebuilding that community. We are working at this point in six different communities in and around Kansas City. We've found a formula that we think works, and we try and duplicate it. We have identified resources and we try to expand on the utilization of those resources.

**The Community Development Corporation of Kansas City (CDC-KC)**

The community development movement started in 1967. Bobby Kennedy went to Bedford-Stuyvesant in New York and looked at the blight and turned to a group of community programs and asked "What can we do?" "How can we go about changing this dilemma?" It was recommended that some money be made available so that the residents of the community could participate in their own self-determination.

The Office of Economic Opportunity allocated \$40,000,000. The money was appropriated to do an experiment to see if minority and disenfranchised communities could develop solutions to their problems. We were one of the experiments in Kansas City demanding participation in the economic activities of our minority community.

CDC-KC got off to a very slow start. First we identified what we wanted to do. We went through a process of planning. We developed an overall economic development strategy that allowed us to look at all the resources that were available in our community for overcoming this economic blight.

We have gone through training and staff orientation, and we have developed community participation. Everybody participated in this long term strategy. We had representatives from every opposition that we could think of serving on an advisory panel, serving on our foundation board, all giving input as to what ought to happen. Twenty years later we are seeing the fruits of our work. My advice to those of you who get started is that you have to stay with it. There are many models that you can use that are available now that we did not have available to us then. But, understand, whatever road you take will be long and frustrating.

At CDC-KC we are concerned about creating employment for the people in our community. Of the 88,000 people in Linwood, 72,000 are black. CDC-KC is doing something about bringing economic parity to the black community. Our four goals are very simple:

- ◆ Employing minority individuals in our community by creating jobs that they can fill;
- ◆ Creating a positive cash flow into our community;
- ◆ Removing blight from our community. We buy burned out buildings or take a piece of vacant land or take a run-down facility, knock them down, and build something new; and,
- ◆ Empowering minorities through entrepreneurship.

I am not yet satisfied with the product. I think that we could do more, we can do bigger and better projects. Let me lay out some of the things we have accomplished so you can better understand where we can go from here.

I have been president of CDC-KC, a non-profit organization, since 1975. The first project that we attempted to do under my leadership was the development of an office building. That project was very successful. We took an old building, renovated it, and then brought in twelve social service organizations as tenants who pay rent. It became the CDC-KC Office Building. It also gave visibility because we had low-income people from all over the community coming in for the various services. In some way, folks saw us having something to do with all those services.

Our first industrial venture was a project called "ARTPRAC." Arthur Wesley was a gentleman who was operating in a burned out filling station across the river in Kansas City, Kansas. Mr. Wesley, was struggling to put together a plastics molding industrial enterprise with very limited resources. We invested some money in the business, moved it to Kansas City, Missouri, and put it in a CDC-KC rehabilitated facility. The business is now the largest minority-owned plastics molding injection plant in America.

Every time we have the opportunity, we take advantage of resources that we have and put a minority entrepreneur in business. We expect that entrepreneur will ultimately buy us out of the deal. If that individual does not meet our expectations and our contractual agreements, we will remove that individual by virtue of conversion. What we generally have is preferred stock, and we convert our preferred stock to common voter stock and end up removing that individual from the company by doing whatever we feel is necessary.

From the plastics enterprise we got involved in another company called Builders Block, a cement block manufacturing plant, where we manufacture all kinds of cement products. In 1977, when we acquired Builders Block, there were eight cement block manufacturing plants in Kansas City. Today there are only two. We control about 80% of the market at this point. We will control 100% of the market within two years. Builders Block generates enough income to cover about 40% of our administrative budget.

Newspaper Electronics is another company we helped start. It manufactures news editing computers used in newspaper, radio, and television newsrooms. We were the majority shareholder (we have since sold our shares) during the development of this operation. It is now run by one of our former staff, whom we put in at the beginning as comptroller. Newspaper Electronics also manufactures home and business computers. In fact, our entire network is hooked up with Newspaper Electronics computers at this point.

We attempted to revive the "Cakebox Bakers," a large specialty bakery in Kansas City, located in the heart of our community, that employed over 150 black folk from our community. This has been our only failure so far. But, that was a healthy experience, too, because we never scrambled so hard to make something work.

Another one of our projects is a pre-sort mail business, "Kansas City Pre-sort Mail." We sold it off at a profit. We acquired Southmark Shopping Center, a very small shopping center of 28,000 square feet on the east side of Kansas City. It consists of a grocery store, liquor store, laundromat, dry cleaners, beauty shop, and barber shop. Small ventures like that feed the neighborhood. We have paid that shopping center off twice and we are presently working towards paying it off for the third time from the revenue from the shopping center.

We capitalized an 80-unit apartment complex, with a 15% occupancy rate. We have been able to go in and completely rehab that housing project, and it's been 100% occupied since 1981. The new Linwood Shopping Center is probably our most glamorous development project to date. It's one of the best examples of how community and church can work together.

### **The Church and CDC-KC: The Story of Linwood Shopping Center**

An old hospital sat on the site of the shopping center at 31st and Prospect. This hospital tried to grow and expand, but the community would not allow it to because the folks in the community did not want to give up their homes. Consequently, the hospital moved, leaving behind vacant buildings. A developer bought the hospital and took all of the salvage out of it and left, leaving us with a monstrous pile of cement, old bricks, scrap metal, and a facility with three layers of basement in it. It just sat there for five years and nobody did anything about it.

Thirty First Street and Prospect was the worst cross street that we had in Kansas City. It had the highest murder rate, number of nightclubs, houses of prostitution, and drug traffic. I am sure that in every community there's a street like it. Most people wanted to do something about it but had no courage to start.

The Black Baptist Ministers' Union Of Kansas City (BMU-KC) was trying to figure out how it could get involved in economic development. The chairman of the BMU-KC Economic Development Committee approached me and said, "Don, because of your expertise in business development, can you help us find a project that we can do and something that would be good for the community?"

I introduced the ministers to this huge blight. The ministers felt a responsibility because, at one time, after the building had been vacated, the state wanted to put a prison there. BMU-KC stood in unison and blocked the prison. They were able to say no, but they had no recommendations about what else they could do with the site. Consequently, the project continued to deteriorate and we ended up with this sad state of affairs. Some people in the community blamed BMU-KC for that deterioration, so they felt, "Yeah, this would be great."

BMU-KC wanted to help remove the blight. After we removed the blight, we did a feasibility study and determined that the best use for the land was a shopping center. That was the will of the community. That's what the people wanted. The City Council was reluctant to give us the resources necessary to undertake this project. So I went back to the ministers almost by accident and said, "I'm having a difficult time getting our City Council representatives to agree to work with us on this project. We're going to need the city's involvement to make it happen." They said, "Well, why won't they help?" I said, "I don't know!" The ministers decided to visit the city council members.

Eighteen of the BMU-KC ministers went with me to meet with the four black City Council Representatives first, to ask for their support. They gave us all kinds of reasons and at the end of that, Reverend Hartsfield (then chair for BMU-KC) stood up and explained the facts of life to the councilpersons. You work with us on this project; or in two years when you run for office, none of you will be back.

The City Council leveraged about \$1.3 million into that project to help it get started. However, the very first money to go into the project was money that the ministers had raised from their congregations by passing the plate. That was very important psychologically, for the impact that it had on the development in the community -- all of a sudden, everybody in the community started feeling some ownership. We started working toward the same goal. Suddenly, everyone was saying, "We're going to have a shopping center here." All the people believed in it.

We had another windfall. When ABC television wanted to shoot the movie "The Day After," they chose our site to shoot the "scene of effects" after the nuclear bomb. ABC television thought that is what the nuclear holocaust would look like. We were paid \$8,000 a day to shoot there. Now, that's what it looked like then. We won the All-America's Cities Award in 1986 for having one of the most beautiful community shopping centers in America.

The BMU-KC again came to our aid when the banks refused to give us a loan to build the mall. The churches got a list of all the members who had accounts there and we gave that to the bank. This opened the doors for us to get funding. Now the bank in our community works with us. We have control of the board and we control all of the jobs and we pretty much control where that money in the bank is spent. It is right across the street from our office. The bank understands that in order to exist in our community it must work with us.

We built the Linwood Shopping Center. It currently houses a Goodyear Service Center, a drug store, a super market, a religious bookstore, a Payless Shoe Store, a Hallmark card store, a hat store, beauty shop, barber shop, travel business, a construction company, and a host of other small ventures. It has been 100% occupied since Day One after construction. It has been profitable ever since. We need more space. So, we just broke ground to expand the shopping center. We are building another 60,000 square feet across the street.

Kansas City's economy is pretty much like most black economies. Our community spends \$1.5 billion a year on consumable goods and retail goods. We cannot buy any of those retail goods from a minority firm because we have no minorities doing retail business. We spend approximately \$300 million a year on groceries. But there is only one black-owned grocery store, and he does less than \$1 million a year. That's \$299 million a year we spend on groceries outside our community. We spend over \$224 million a year on clothes and there is not one black-owned clothing store in Kansas City. We spend over \$120 million a year on furniture, but there is no furniture store owned by a black person in Kansas City. We spend over \$100 million a year on appliances and there is not one black-owned appliance store, nor a black-owned drugstore in our community.

Most of our minority entrepreneurs own janitorial services, trucking services, landscape services, or some kind of cleaning service. They are not the kind of establishments that will attract repeat business from minorities.

We have been a people that have been laborers, but not producers. We do not manufacture. We have not had the capital; we have not had the opportunity to be producers. We are going to do whatever we have to do to pool all of our money together and to leverage firms to become producers.

We should learn to do business with one another. We do not have any of the businesses that the regular folk in the community can use on a daily basis. In the new project, where we have expanded, 18 of the 20 businesses will be minority owned. CDC-KC is going to be part owner in the minority businesses, and provide technical assistance to them.

Other CDC-KC developments include a shopping center called Kensington Square (200,000 square foot shopping center), and Palestine Gardens senior citizens housing project, a partnership with my church. We are about to break ground on an 84-unit housing project directly to the west of the shopping center. This will be a model project as well, because it will have all the amenities. The idea is to try and bring back the middle income families that have left the community for the suburbs.

Let me go back to the story of Linwood Shopping Center. The community participates and feels that the businesses in the mall should serve the community. I often receive complaints like these about shops they have visited, the common space or the parking lot:

"The place is filthy!" (This is in reference to the grocery store. My answer usually is, "I am sorry ma'am, we are going to take care of that.")

"I went into the store and they did not have this product or they didn't have that product. The store manager didn't know anything."

"I went down to the Goodyear store and the boys did not fix my car right."

These individuals have support before they present their complaints. They have complained to their ministers. Then the minister calls: "Don, Miss Jones was over there and she was not satisfied. Can you get this problem resolved?" There is a working relationship between the three parties, and a feeling of ownership. The people feel a sense of ownership and they will tell me in a minute, "We did not give all this money for you to sit up here and do nothing."

Let me share a story of what happened to me after we finished building the mall. I was standing out in front of the shopping center; I was feeling really good about the accomplishment. Telling myself, "Look what I have done!" A little lady came up and said, "Young man, you looking at our shopping center?" "Yes, ma'am, I am." She said, "Our minister built that." I said, "Beg your pardon?" "My pastor, he built that shopping center. We got together and we put our money in and we built that shopping center and he got some other preachers to help him, too." "Yes, ma'am. You all did a fantastic job." She went on down the road feeling real good about what she had done. And the last things she said to me was, "If I catch any nasty little boys putting some stuff on the walls, I will beat them with this cane."

We must have that kind of attitude. That attitude should permeate in the community. It must be there: this is ours; we protect it; we put money in there; we made it happen. Problems exist but we have the mechanism to deal with them because of community support. Whether we live in a ghetto or goldmine? The choice is ours. As a community we have to decide on our goals. We have to pool our resources to make "stuff" happen. The church is one such resource. In Linwood it has opened some doors.



### **Discussion and Questions**

One participant wanted to know whether CDC-KC development activities in the community stimulated other programs or development initiatives. Maxwell said that a new post office, a library, and several housing projects have also been initiated.

Another participant wanted to know if CDC-KC was involved in any social services. Maxwell explained that CDC-KC's focus is on economic development. They work closely with social service organizations in the community, but are not directly involved in the delivery of the services.

One participant asked whether the CDC-KC model could be applied somewhere else. Maxwell believes that each community should have its own strategy according to its particular needs.

Another participant wondered about what role the church was playing in spiritual growth of the community, given its deep involvement in economic issues. Maxwell concurred that the Baptist Ministers' Union was founded to promote spiritual, political, and economic change in the Black community. It still follows these goals and the CDC-KC acts as its economic arm.

Another participant asked about the size and composition of the CDC-KC board. Maxwell explained that the board is made up of 15 members from various backgrounds. Some are retired, others are still working. The youngest member is 25 years old. Fifty percent of the board members live in the community. Low income people are represented on the board, and it is all black.

There was a critical question about how CDC-KC can justify building middle income housing in a low income community. Maxwell pointed out that a mixed income base of residents was desirable, in that it will generate sustainable economic development when middle income residents will spend their incomes in the community. Such development was also necessary to stop the flight of residents to the suburbs. It was seen as part of the solution to the problems of the community.

## **THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Reverend Wayne Gordon  
As Interviewed by Denise Johnson**

### **Church Beginnings**

DJ: You have been pastor for 15 years in a community that is about 99% black.

WG: That's correct.

DJ: Tell us about your background and how you chose the Lawndale community for your ministry.

WG: I grew up in Iowa, in a community very different from North Lawndale. In fact, the population of the city of Chicago is bigger than that of the whole state of Iowa. I grew up in a Christian home. As a Christian I wanted to do what God wanted to me to do with my life. I asked God what he wanted me to do when I was in high school. I felt God was calling me to a black community to follow Him and do whatever He wanted me to do. I then went to Wheaton College. While I was a student at Wheaton, I was involved in the city of Chicago and in the suburbs. After graduation from Wheaton I moved into Lawndale. I began teaching and coaching at the local public high school. I was the only teacher, black or white, (about 65% of the teachers were black) who lived in the neighborhood. I moved into the neighborhood and began teaching and coaching. That's how I first got to Lawndale, with never the idea of having a church. I only wanted to teach, coach and work with young people.

DJ: What did you teach and how did you decide to start a community church?

WG: Well, I taught history, and coached football and wrestling. I taught and coached for 6 years. One of the things that we did not have at the school, which is a city school, was a weight machine. We had no facilities for our team, so we bought a weight machine and put it in the neighborhood in 1976. All the athletes and the coaches helped us put a little storefront together. After that we began to have outreach to the youth. Through those young people we started a Bible study and then the Bible study began to lead people to a faith in God and a faith in Christ. Many of those we reached did not go to church. I could not get them to come to one of the churches nearby where I was active. So we started the church. What ended up happening is these sharp high school students turned the tables on my wife and me one night. This was in 1978, when they said, "Listen, a church is not a denomination, a church is not some of these things that everybody thinks a church is, but a church is people who believe in Christ and getting together. So why don't we start meeting here, in this room, on Sunday morning where we have the weight machine."

DJ: A school?

WG: No, not a school. A storefront. The weight machine was in a storefront because we could not get into the school at night. One of the plights of public school education in the inner city of Chicago, at least, is that they lock up the school at 6:00 p.m. and you cannot get in. We had put this weight machine in the community. In 1978, then, these high school students my wife, another couple and I began meeting on Sunday mornings in the weight machine room and that was the beginning of Lawndale Community Church.

DJ: Are you trained as pastor? You say that you felt a kind of "calling from God" -- that you started to feel that you were needed.

WG: When we started the church, we really didn't need a pastor. I was teaching and coaching. My wife had a job and we were meeting in this storefront that we lived above. So the kids just said "Well, you're our pastor, cuz you're our coach." It wasn't exactly what many churches would think of as the beginnings of a church. It was exciting because it was a grassroots effort. It wasn't my idea. I never wanted to be a pastor. But after they made me their pastor, then I went on to school. I got a Master's degree in Theology, the New Testament. It was an interesting thing. We started to reach unchurched people and to help people who were unchurched. In our neighborhood it was a very important to be able to reach out to people. So we began to dream and think how can we help our community. That was the very beginnings of our church.

### Program Development

DJ: I see. Tell me about the key elements that went into the decision to start the programs you run. Can you tell me about some of the programs that you have and so forth?

WG: The basis of what we do is found in the Bible in the great commandment and in the second greatest commandment. The great commandment in the Bible is to love God and the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. We have taken that theme as our church front. We want to do everything we can to love God. Normal churches try to do that. But then we take that second greatest commandment very seriously and that is loving our neighbor as ourself. That means making sure that our neighbors have all the things it takes to be the kind of person that God calls us to be in life. Some of those key elements of what we have tried to do is that whenever we see a need, we try to meet it because we want to help somebody. We have never dreamed a program on our own but it's been grassroots efforts.

One of the things we did early on was to sit around in a room with less people than we have here, fifteen to twenty people, and ask ourselves what are the needs of our community? We wrote them down on a chart. The very first time we did that, we also questioned ourselves whether there was anything on the chart that we could do. One of the mothers spoke up and said we could start a laundromat because she was afraid to go to the existing laundromat because of the gangs that hang out there. So we put a bunch of washers and dryers right in the church, and the people of the community came to our church do their laundry. In return for the laundry service they were asked to cleanup and set up the church for Sunday. So the important question is what are the community's needs? What do the people perceive as their needs? We have not even covered the first slate. We re not doing everything that was covered on that first slate that we had on the chalkboard.

Medical care was on there, so we have a medical clinic now in our church. We service close to 20,000 patients that come from the west side of Chicago. We have eight doctors, but we started off with one. Housing, education, and leadership development were among the top needs of the community. North Lawndale lost most of its leaders. They changed residence. The leaders moved out to live in other parts of Chicago, integrated parts, suburbs, and other communities that are perceived to be better than North Lawndale. Leadership development is an important aspect in the community.

Another important aspect of what we have been doing is giving people dignity. For example, many people who use the medical clinic are very poor. Lawndale is the fifteenth poorest community in America. So people were saying that if you're going to have a medical clinic, you got to give free care. We decided that free care would not be well appreciated by the people because it would take away their dignity. It would be viewed as another welfare program. So when we began our medical clinic in 1984 we had a \$5 charge that people paid. If they could not afford the \$5, we would ask them to do some cleaning --sweeping or vacuum cleaning. In the winter time they shoveled snow. People paid something to come to us. They felt good about it. We have a clothing resale shop. We do not give away our clothes. We sell them for a dime. We sell them for fifty cents. And when people walk out of the clothing ministry building, they say, "I just bought these clothes." They support our ministry because it gives them a sense of dignity, a sense that this is theirs. It is the dignity of paying for something. We always want to ask the question, are we serving someone's dignity? How do we help people and not take away their dignity? And of course, the other important question is how can we help people?

We also want to help people help themselves. At Lawndale we ask the question, how do we help somebody so that in a year from now, they won't need our help.

## Problem Solving

DJ: If I could come back to the list that you made in your community; well, in reading through the case study, I noticed that crime is at the top of the list. You mentioned that fear of the gangs prompted the start of the laundromat service. What other kinds of things does your church do to address that very pressing problem of crime in your community?

WG: That is a very difficult one to address. Crime in our community is primarily related to drugs. For example, in the first year I was married (back in 1977), my home was broken into about 8 times. So crime is something that you have to deal with. What we are trying to do is provide alternatives for young people as well as for adults to do something other than be involved in crime. Our alternatives involve a whole lot of things. Number one, an alternative involves something to do with your time. So we have a regulation-sized gym; we have a racquetball court at our church; and people from the community can come in and play. It's open to the community. It's not closed; it's not just for church members; it's not just for those people who pay a fee. In fact, right now this morning from 6:30 to about 8:30 there were probably 25-30 men in the community that were playing basketball. So providing an alternative for something else to do with their time helps.

The other alternative is a job. How do we help people get jobs? We have worked hard to help people get jobs that they could not get through job placement. We have also done some job creation. For example, we started making window shades for a suburban home builder. This venture helped two women get off welfare. They are now employed as window shade makers. We have started a welding business repairing garbage dumpsters. We took 2 unemployed young men at the very beginning and trained them in welding skills. They are now employed as welders because of the skills they acquired. We have created employment and are also helping people acquire job skills.

Another thing we do is we encourage everybody in our community to call the police when they see something happening. Apathy runs rampant in our neighborhood. You know why they do not call the police? They are of the view that the police is not going to do anything anyway. We encourage them to help the police. We also encourage people to be active in a block club. If there is no block club, we urge them to start a block club. Our church provides free space for any block club in the neighborhood that wants to meet at our church. Of course the church gym is also open to them. We have had community forums on crime, on drugs, and education at Lawndale Community Church.

## **Funding**

- DJ: You talk about providing employment opportunities, and that was very high on the list to people in your community. You talk about getting people jobs, paying them to do certain things. Where does the funding come from for your organization to be able to do that, to be able to pay people for things?
- WG: We want to create a system so that the things we do don't cost us anything to do them. I have already mentioned two creative ways of doing it. We entered a partnership with a suburban manufacturer to start the welding business. The manufacturer gives us all the dumpsters that we can use to repair. So it did not cost us really a whole lot except for the startup parts to keep that kind of thing going. We did the same thing with the window shade business. The suburban home builder needed this service so he was willing to buy all the equipment and set us up if we could manufacture these shades. It does not always work out quite so nicely and quite so easily. Sometime we solicit funding from some foundations in Chicago. We have quite a few foundations that have funded our programs. Also other churches. Suburban churches are usually willing to help with some things as well as our own people are willing to give money to help if they see that it is going to make a difference in someone's life.
- D: Are there any problems with foundations funding corporations created by the church?
- W: No, we formed a separate corporation from the church to receive funds to support our development activities. We have the Lawndale Christian Development Corporation that we use to do housing, economic development, and education under. We have several corporations that have been born out of the church.
- D: Do you receive any kind of public funding (e.g. government grants) for any of these programs?
- W: Yes, we get some public funding in our housing ministry. We have two young men that were trained in carpentry skills working with our housing and construction crews. Those two men are funded by a grant that comes from the federal government and the city of Chicago. Also, we have received a Community Development Block Grant from the city of Chicago. We are in partnership with the city of Chicago, the state of Illinois and indirectly with the federal government.
- DJ: Are you personally involved in all this fund raising? Are you the grant proposal writer? How does all the money come in from those various corporations? Or are you on a committee with the people who work on those kinds of things?

WG: At first it was me. But now I do not write proposals anymore. One of our staff who is with us here at this conference is our chief grant writer. He does most of the grant writing. We have a separate person who does it for our medical clinic; the director of our medical clinic writes those. I end up normally meeting with the foundations and talking with them a little bit about what we are doing.

Our budget is now about \$2 million. It was about \$10,000 when we started twelve, thirteen years ago. Each ministry is involved in the process of raising their own budget. So, the responsibility does not fall on one person.

DJ: Do you ever run into problems with fundraising because of the church affiliation?

W: No. We have not been turned down a lot. And that is an excellent question. I can tell I'm working with a pro. That's an excellent question because most churches believe that people won't fund us because we're a church. Often we work with the secular foundations in Chicago, we have found are that they are most excited about us because we are a church.

We are in a new day. I think, in our times in the United States, people are recognizing that the church, particularly in the black community, is the one vital institution that has an opportunity to make changes. You know, our federal government has poured just billions of dollars into making changes, but it has not worked. We still have the blight of the ghetto, of the inner city. People are recognizing the fact that the city of Chicago and the state of Illinois have both come to us and said we want to work with you. The state of Illinois has asked us to be partners with them and they might let us put a doctor at the local public aid office. We would be the first in the whole state to do that. We are Christian and we do not try to cover that up in any way.

Secular foundations have funded us. In fact, our first major grant came from the Chicago Community Trust. The grant helped us renovate the building that houses our activities. It was a condemned building; there were holes in the roof big enough for cars to drop through. We had an estimate of \$90,000 just to fix the roof on this building and we only had \$25,000 for the whole project. I got some high school kids on their Spring break and we took a week off and began to do the roof ourselves. We bought a \$1,000 saw and began to take the roof apart to begin to put a new roof on it. We had applied for a grant to the Chicago Community Trust.

They happened to visit the site when, myself and thirty high school kids were on the roof working. And here comes the lady. I did not even know she was on a site visit. I probably would have put on a tie for that. After her site visit, she called back and said "You know what? We don't want to give you the money the way that you have asked." We had asked for \$50,000 for three years. She said, "How would you like it if we gave \$150,000 right now to renovate the building?" She told me the reason she was doing this was because she had never visited a site in the city of Chicago where she had ever seen that kind of community effort. "If you can get thirty high school kids to give up their Spring break, and work as hard as you were working them up there, I know the community is behind this. I know this is a community effort".

She also told me that they were willing to give us the money directly to the church for the health center. In that case the foundation liked the close involvement with the church. When we get funding for something in particular, we don't go out and buy bibles with that or we don't go and have any evangelistic crusade. When we say we're going to use money for something, we use money for that exact purpose.

### Interdenominational Relationships

DJ: Let me ask you about your relationship with other churches in the community. One of the things that I think happens in black communities in particular, is that sometimes there is a competition or an uneasiness between churches. In reading about your community, in a 5 1/2 square blocks area, there are churches.

WG: I would say 150 churches.

DJ: 150 churches. Fifty of those are traditional. The others are storefront churches. All of these are in a very small community. And I am wondering how the relationship is. Were you received as interlopers when you came into the community? What is that relationship, given the phenomenal growth you have had in the last twelve years?

WG: That is another good question, Denise. I appreciate it and you are making me talk about honest things here today. We started in a way that was non-threatening to the other churches. We did not just start a church. Of course, I am white in a black community and that is something that has to be addressed. North Lawndale is 99.99% black. When I moved into the neighborhood, I integrated Lawndale. And then I got married and the white population doubled. I had two kids and it doubled again. But, that is the kind of neighborhood we had.



So, it was kind of unusual for a white person to pastor a church in the community. We started off with an outreach to unchurched people. I went around and met with every one of the churches in the community. I told them that "we want to work with you. We want to reach people who do not go to church. We are not trying to steal your members. But we're working together to reach unchurched people." We have worked with the churches as much as possible. For the first five years, we never even put a sign on the door. We couldn't afford a sign. We had these plate glass windows and our weight machine was on the other side of it.

The Jim Jones situation was a difficult period. After Jim Jones, this white guy leading a lot of black people to their deaths, a few parents pulled their kids out of our church. But we did weather the storms over the years. We were not trying to be a big splash. We were just trying to love each other, love God and love people. Two things I think that tell the story of what's happened over the last ten or twelve years. One is that we have fifty African American pastors who use our health clinic. We only have 50-100 people on Sunday morning. We see 400 people a week in our medical clinic. So we're not trying to get anybody when they come and see our doctor, come to our church. If they do not have a church, we invite them to come. Fifty pastors feel comfortable with coming to our church and sending their members. They invite us to come and speak at their churches. And they also want us to tell them about the health center because they're getting good health care from our doctors.

A second thing is about a year ago, one of the most prestigious Black Baptist churches in our community started this award. They wanted to give the award to a church that is loving the community and doing a good job, living out bible Christianity in the community. They chose Lawndale Community Church to receive their first award. At a big ceremony at their church they presented us with the award. The pastor there came to our church and did one of our Sunday morning services and handed the plaque to us again. I think that told the story that other churches do accept us, and recognize us as a viable partner in what we are doing together.

### **Church Membership Requirement and the Housing Program**

DJ: I understand that in order to be a member of your church, you have to live in the community.

WG: That's right.

DJ: To be a member. Now you can come to the services and so forth if you live outside. I also noticed, and I hope that I have this correct, in your housing program about half, or a little bit less than half of the participants are white. Is that correct? Or is that incorrect? I was thinking that if most of people who belong to the church are black they should be the majority participants in the housing program.

WG: I think that figure's not exactly right. In fact, in our housing ministry we've really never technically helped a white family. The white families in our community are staff people who moved in. Now a couple of them have gotten homes. Our very first house that we did was that of a big time drug dealer located on the worst drug street in Chicago. I could not get any black families to move onto that street. In fact, one girl in our church got shot in the leg while standing on that street. Talking to me she said, "I wouldn't live on that street! I got shot on that street." I mean it was so bad that nobody would do it. We had a black football coach at Farragut High School who was coming to our church, the head coach, and we had a white guy who was in charge of our housing ministry at the time who said that together, "We'll pioneer this street. We will move on that street." The white man and his wife and the black football coach and his wife, moved on that street. In that first building we had two white families and one black family.

DJ: You have several people on the program?

WG: Right. I don't think we have another white family involved in this. So the figure was probably accurate at the time.

D: How many buildings are we talking about? How many families are involved?

W: We actually have about four components to housing. We buy old abandoned buildings and rehabilitate them -- fix them up. Our goal is to do about eight to ten units a year. So that's eight to ten families a year we're helping to get into a better house. About half of those will own the building they live in through a lease-purchase program. We also have a program of rental units where we have people who have to rent for awhile. We have a Samaritan House that has two families that usually are at shelters before they come to us. They rent an apartment from our church for three months at around \$200-\$250 a month. At the end of the three months, they get that money back and use it to pay a security deposit and first month's rent.

We also have a brand-new program we are launching right now which I think is going to sweep the United States. It will take us 3 years to develop it. The objective is to help poor people and other people build their own houses. We are going to start building our first homes on vacant lots. Currently we have a forty square block area around our church that we call our target area. There are eight sites that have more than four lots in a row. Our aim is to acquire all the sites for our project. The people will literally build their own homes. They will do their own plumbing, electric, everything. In order to do all this, we are setting up a little factory in the neighborhood. This is in collaboration with the suburban homebuilder for whom we were building the window shades. He is going to move to Lawndale to live in the first model house that we build this spring.

## Leadership Development and Education

DJ: That is really something. Well, I am going to come back for a moment to the leadership question. And then I will open it up for questions from the floor. I am sure you all have questions for Reverend Gordon. He is a dynamic person, he is a persuasive person, and it is clear to me at least in these few minutes that it is easy for you to talk to people and to bring them together. If you, for whatever reason, decide to leave Lawndale, what would happen to that ministry? Is this completely dependent on you? Upon your dynamic personality, aggressiveness and your willingness to go out and just sort of back that community? Would it survive if you were no longer there?

WG: Well, early on, honestly, I would probably have answered you, "No." Although I have a strong belief that this is not my ministry I have not really been dreaming. It's been the young people, the kids in particular and some of their parents who helped make this a reality. I was just there and things were going on, they were far beyond my dreams. There is a verse in the Bible, Ephesians 3:20 that says "God is able to do exceeding abundantly." Beyond that, we never asked for a thing. In our brochure, you will see in the gym there's this banner that hangs and says "The Lawndale Miracle." And under it Ephesians 3:20. There is a tremendous faith amongst us that this is God's thing, not mine. You know, it is far beyond me.

Leadership development has been our commitment from the very beginning. For example, in our education program, we have one specific program with two full-time staff working on preparing young people to go to college. Then we will have scholarships for those students after they get into college for four years. The program prepares them for college. We have 53 young people in that program right now. We work hard to keep them in the program. They will finish school. Our methods have been copied elsewhere in the Chicago public schools.

The exciting thing about our ministry now, is that we have had probably around 10 or 12 young people who have gone on to college, graduated, and have come back to the community to live and work there. That is exciting. Leadership development has been a really important area for us. People say it takes 15 years to build your own leaders. Tom Skerritt told me once, "If you're gonna be successful, what you gotta do is be committed to building a new generation of black Christian leadership here." That is what we are trying to do at Lawndale. In our ministry for example, about 85% of our staff are African American.

We have an African American doctor who grew up in the neighborhood, graduated from Farragut High School and has come back. We have a dentist that grew up in the neighborhood, graduated from dental school and has come back to the community. They provide special role models.

So the answer to your question, right now while I am here in Minneapolis, in Lawndale, they're doing great. Some day, God will probably find me a different direction to go in. I do not look forward to that day, though. I do not want to leave. I love it. I raised my family there, my two children. I have no fear whatsoever that my children will be drug addicts. I have no fear whatsoever that my son is going to be an alcoholic. Why? Because they see the reality of alcohol. They see the reality of drugs. They know their neighbor was shot and killed. They know their neighbor who was selling drugs is in jail. They know the realities of it and it isn't glamorous. That is just one of many reasons.

Let me tell you one good story about the excitement of raising a family in a black community. My daughter goes to a Chicago Public School that is about 1/3 black, 1/3 hispanic, and 1/3 white. It is a magnet school and she rides a school bus to the school. When she was in kindergarten, we made it a point in our home not to talk much about colors of skin, but to talk about people. And there was enough sociologist in me that I didn't want to know, I wanted to watch my children develop and find out when they discovered they were white living in a black neighborhood. So, my daughter's in kindergarten and it's about halfway through the year. She comes home one day, she said "Daddy, a little girl slapped me on the face today." And I said, "Oh, she did? Tell me about it." And she began to tell me that she gets on the bus at this-and-this corner and began to talk and all of a sudden out of the blue, she said, "And she's black, like me." I said, "That's very interesting." Now I did not spoil it. I didn't ask her any questions about it. I just said, "Well, that's interesting, honey," and went on. She was five then. She's ten now.

About 2 months after, I went to school one day and I decided I would ride the bus home with my little girl. So, I got on the bus and I, of course, had remembered her story and said, "When that little girl gets on the bus, be sure to just point her out to me. I want to see her," because I wanted to see what 'black like Angela' looked like. Well, anyway, all these cute little black girls with their pigtails and their hair ribbons are bobbing on the bus and I'm waiting any second for Angela to say "That's her, Daddy." But, then all of a sudden, a Mexican girl was coming on the bus, and Angela pointed and she said, "Daddy, that's the girl that slapped me." Now, you can draw your own conclusions on exactly what that means. I think it means this: my daughter lives in an all-black community. Instead of judging everything by the whiteness of their skin, she judged it by the darkness of their skin. And my daughter is a dark-skinned white person. Being a dark-skinned white person, this Mexican girl was a dark-skinned Mexican person and their skin colors were pretty close to the same and so everybody's black and this little Mexican girl is the same skin tone as my daughter Angel.

So, I am raising a family, and my wife and my 3 children, we love living in Lawndale. The people are great. Nobody's burnt crosses in my yard saying, "Honky, go home." But, we've lived together and been able to work together and that's been exciting.

### Questions

**Q:** What ministerial fellowships go with your church? And what percent of your church's operational budget comes from your membership?

**WG:** We have a Lawndale network that we are proud of. We are nondenominational so we're not a part of the black ministerial associations. We are in partnership with 21 other African American churches on the west side of Chicago called the Isaiah Plan. We are building houses together. The partnership includes a couple Catholic churches, about ten Baptist churches, a Lutheran church, an Episcopalian church and then a couple like us.

Of all the things that we do, we are 50% self-sufficient. That does not all just come out of offerings. That comes out of the fees that we charge for different services. But we're 50% self-sufficient, we're 50% dependent upon outside grants, gifts, and that kind of thing.

**Q:** Do you help disabled people who are mainstreamed into the Lawndale community?

**WG:** Yes, we have a number of people with various disabilities. One of the things that we're trying in the church to do is to reach the persons that no one else is reaching. The people who are falling through the cracks. We have a number of mentally disabled people that are a part of our congregation. We have some physically handicapped, we have two or three people with wheelchairs that are a part of our congregation who come to church on a regular basis as well as in some of our other services. Of course, in our medical clinic, we service a tremendous amount of people who have a whole lot of various handicaps.

**Q:** Do you have women leaders in your church?

**WG:** Oh, yes. Certainly, one of the people who have influenced me the most is a woman named Ethel Townsell. Ethel had a stroke and has lived in the housing projects. She has been a fabulous person and has taught me so much. She died almost a year ago. But before she died, her 3 sons had all graduated from college and she made a tremendous impact on my life. Many times I would pick her up and we'd throw her wheelchair in the trunk of my car and go visit one of her students. On several occasions we had large conferences at our church she would get down and pray. Thank you for helping me say that.

**Q:** To what extent were the human resources that were necessary to achieve your objectives existing in the community, and to what extent do you draw from outside?

**WG:** That's a hard question. One of the things that we do not do is we do not go out to suburban churches and suburban areas and ask them to give us money. We have not looked for people to help us. People hear about us, the Chicago Tribune and some of the other media have run articles on Lawndale Community Church. Some of the people who hear about us call us and/or come to see us. We have never been limited in what we do because of lack of outside resources. For example, the gym and church building that is pictured in our brochure use to be an old Cadillac automobile dealership. It wasn't some fancy church. In order to get the proper height for the gym we had to dig down 6 1/2 feet. Using jackhammers, shovels, picks, and wheelbarrows we began to dig that hole. Every day after school, kids came. After digging for 9 months, with hundreds and hundreds of kids and adults working, a suburban guy heard about the project and donated a Caterpillar and finished it in 3 days. The message carried by the digging was that it demonstrated that our people can do something. In fact, the Caterpillar driver could not believe that the huge hole that had been made was done with human resources.

**Q:** One of the problems with most churches is that the structure of the church and the leadership is mostly volunteer. It seems that with all that you've done, you need full-time staffing. What is the makeup of the full-time staff and what are their responsibilities? What advice can you give to churches that do not have that staffing structure that wants to accomplish some of the things you have done?

**W:** It is probably not fair to use our current staff size as basis for what one can do because we started with a very small group. We have 50 people on our staff today. Twenty five of those are working in the medical clinic and about another 12 or 13 are working in the development corporation. We have about 8 or 10 that are on our church staff. Some of them are involved in education ministry.

For the first eight years of our church, we did not even have a church secretary. There were two people, a part-time youth pastor and myself as the pastor. It was only after we opened the medical clinic in 1984, that our staff size grew. So most of what we did was with volunteers and the people who carved a dream and realized that they had to do something. We were a storefront church with 15. We started with 15 people. And after 3 years of being a storefront church, we only had 45 people. The average storefront church in our neighborhood has about 35 to 40 people. It took time, but the people believed in God and believed in some things that they thought could make a difference in our community. For example, when we opened our medical clinic, 50 high school students and myself went door-to-door to 10,000 households and gave out a flyer so that people would know that we were open. The kids believed they could make a difference.

**Q:** In Minneapolis some members of the City Council want to pass an ordinance that would regulate the location of storefront churches. Do you consider your church to be a storefront church? A lot of times people don't want storefront churches in their neighborhoods. How do you deal with that issue?

**WG:** OK. The storefront church issue is that something that's happening in Minneapolis? That needs to be addressed and I think the storefront is fabulous. A great church can be a storefront church its whole life, and be a great church that's doing a great work in the community. I would work against such an ordinance. In Chicago, you know, they leave churches alone. We like that. As Denise said, we have 150 churches in North Lawndale, at least 100 of them are storefront churches with about 30, 40 people in them. Are we trying to revitalize our community? The answer to that is of course "Yes." We want to make a difference.

In that 40 square block area there wasn't a McDonald's. We got our first McDonald's two years ago. There is no Burger King in our neighborhood. We do not have the money nor the services that every community has. Yes, we want to be out there to make a change; we are trying to make a difference. We opened a dry cleaning business so that people can put their money in the community and not have to take it elsewhere. So we're continually looking for those kinds of things to revitalize the street that we're on.

**Q:** Do you have a future program for the development of Lawndale?

**WG:** Yes. We have a vision statement of our development corporation. We do not want North Lawndale to change through displacement of the poor and replaced by new higher income people -- gentrification or whatever you want to call it. We want Lawndale to change and we want it to be along the lines the people of Lawndale want it. They are entitled to a piece of the pie when it changes. We're empowering them to take control of their community and make into a safe community, a community that people would want to live in and a community that meets the needs of those people who live there.

**Q:** Is your development corporation separate from the church, and non-profit?

**WG:** The development corporation is a separate, non-profit corporation. The board of directors of the development corporation are appointed by the deacons of our church.

**Q:** Do you do any banking with the Community Bank of Lawndale?

**WG:** All of our banking is done there; we're one of their biggest accounts. All of our personal accounts are there and every one of our ministries' major accounts is there. We will stay there until we have \$100,000, if we ever are blessed to have that much in the fund. An account over \$100,000 is not insured.

- Q:** Part of your focus has been on the church and part on the community. You're talking more about the church as initiator and leader. In a lot of communities there are secular community development corporations. I was just wondering, have you found a clash in those communities where secular organizations do what the church is doing? Does the church have to be a leader?
- WG:** I think where there is nothing going on the church ought to lead. If there is something going on, the church ought to be a partner. For example, we do not have a G.E.D. program in our church and we do not have a senior citizens program in our church. Why? Because directly across the street from our main building is a job program that offers G.E.D.'s, so we funnel all of our people in there, and we partner with them. They use our building for various things. A senior citizen ministry is right down the street. It is not a religious corporation nor a not-for-profit corporation and we partner with them. So partnership is very important. But if there is nothing going on, I think we as the church ought to be the initiators of getting something to happen.
- Q:** You say you're non-denominational. What's your advice to the churches and communities of how we get beyond this Methodist only, Baptists only, mentality? How do we bridge those gaps?
- WG:** Well, that's a bigger question than I think I have the ability to answer. That's one of the reasons that we are nondenominational and that we have Catholics that support us, Presbyterians, Methodists, non-Christians. We try to teach people when they come to us, particularly church people, that it's the body of Christ. The body of Christ is universal, world-wide is what the kingdom of God is all about. It is not about being a Methodist or a Baptist or a Lutheran. I think we need to get people teaching that, we need to get pastors in their own local congregations teaching that, and we need to begin ourselves wherever we can. I believe it always starts very small.
- We ought be partners with other people. Be a partner with somebody that is a little different from you, whose beliefs are little different from yours. If we are willing to partner with them, we are a living example of breaking down those barriers (race, social-economic, religious, gender etc).
- DJ:** Thank you very much.

### Comments

Williams and Bakama have developed a case study on the Lawndale Community Church that provides further insight into the growth and development of the Church's programs. The study examines in some depth the formation of the Lawndale Christian Development Corporation and its principle program initiatives. That case study is available through the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.



**PANEL DISCUSSION:**  
**HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY AND CHURCH BE**  
**GOOD PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION?**

**Ralph Colby, Victoria Davis, Wallace Hartsfield, and**  
**Sandra Hilary, Panelists**

Participants in the panel discussion described their visions for effective community-church partnership. Minneapolis City Council member Sandra Hilary argued that the church is a source of values and moral guidance, and can play a role in communities that governments cannot. The church can supply the participants for community projects, as well as nonprofit funding. Churches should also encourage members to be active in community affairs.

Ralph Colby of Project for Pride in Living felt that churches should think less denominationally and more about working together for the good of their community. In other words, churches should act as catalysts for change, not as protectors of their own interests. Using his past experience in the church, Colby suggested that churches of similar denominations located in different areas could work more closely to promote unity between the different communities. It helps to make the rural and suburban communities aware of what is going on in the inner cities. Often, small city churches may be in a position to help.

Victoria Davis, a St. Paul developer, expressed the desire of every community for jobs, accessible services, recreation, good schools, and safety. She stressed that economic development alone often fails to provide the community unity. Most organizations deal with each problem individually, and pay little or no attention to community unity. Churches can provide an integral part of this development by uniting the communities, maintaining access to housing for people in community, encouraging members to patronize African American businesses, creating a fund to provide short term assistance to community businesses, and providing spiritual leadership. Through churches, communities can generate political power, because churches can be a vehicle for amassing the numbers necessary for raising or addressing political issues.

Reverend Wallace Hartsfield, a member of the Black Baptist Ministers Union in Kansas City, Missouri (BMU-KC), Missouri, described the role of his organization in developing the Linwood Shopping Center in Kansas City. BMU-KC worked hand in hand with CDC-KC to transform what had been one of the worst areas of urban blight into a thriving shopping center with 85 percent minority investment. The BMU-KC's involvement helped to open some politicians' as well as bankers' doors.

There was a general consensus among panelists that the church should provide the power, leadership, and motivation for its members and encourage change in their communities. As an institution with strong, perhaps inseparable community ties, the church may be in a better position to perform the role than any other social institution.

Are partnerships best at a small or large scale? Some panelists believed that small coalitions could not implement fundamental change. However, the panel felt that the importance of small coalitions should never be discounted when working toward a larger goal. Strategies for change must vary extensively by community to accommodate differences in values, styles, and goals, and partnerships should avoid emphasizing just one strategy. Panelists also agreed that community economic development is much more than housing programs. Acceptance of this holistic view of development requires that policy makers and community leaders look more deeply for the roots of community problems, and promote truly effective solutions instead of band-aid remedies.

## ORGANIZING COMMUNITY AND CHURCH TO WORK TOWARD A COMMON INTEREST

by Gerald Taylor, National Staff,  
Industrial Area Foundation, Memphis, Tennessee

Community organizers like the Industrial Area Foundation and the people involved in church and community organization have the following options available to them in the 1990s:

- ◆ Go to a romanticized version of the world that was made up of little neighborhoods and little places where all the needs of a community will be taken care of, where we will build up our little shopping areas, etc. That world is gone. That is not the world of the twenty-first century in terms of the restructured economy. If we return to that time we would also be turning to a time when there was segregation in America. That morning is gone and if we go back to that period we will surely die.
- ◆ Stay in the same places that we are in, in terms of what we do. That is, we build individual kingdoms in terms of our individual congregations. These congregations address the immediate/current problems in the local community without looking at the future. Many congregations may be doing that well, but it is like being in the emergency room of a major hospital in an urban area. It is similar to treating the casualties of a struggle caused on the outside the hospital emergency room without considering the root causes. This option I believe also leads us nowhere.
- ◆ We can get up and walk. This option requires that we look for a fundamentally different way of approaching the question of long term neighborhood or economic development in communities and cities and rural areas. It is that option that I am mostly going to speak about this afternoon.

I suggested that our urban infrastructures has decayed. There has been a destruction of employment. Unemployment is high in the working class and rising. Unemployment rates of 25%, 30%, 35%, 40%, 45% and over and all the "social pathologies" that one would expect to find in poor communities can now be found in working and middle class communities. High unemployment in poor and working classes is usually accompanied by more abuse, suicide, drinking, high pregnancy rates among teenagers, and other crimes. Mass out-migration of whites and jobs to the surrounding rural areas and surrounding suburban areas is one example of the problem. It has left the urban cores primarily poor and without a sufficient tax base.

### **Small Is Not Beautiful**

We have an international economy that is changing radically and fundamentally, and the whole idea of small business being a generator of most jobs is false. The real analysis of who creates the most employment are companies with more than a hundred people working for them. There is a mystique, a mythology about small businesses generating lots of employment in America. It is not true.

### **Think Big**

I argue in this context that a fundamentally different way must be found to look at how we approach these questions or we will continue to do the same things that we have been doing, and will lose more and more families, communities, neighborhoods and eventually cities. I would argue that the elements of a strategy must not be small. I reject the position that we should think small. That has been the strategy that we have always used, a block, a house. We do a house and 30 houses are going down around us. We do a small business and 10,000 jobs are being lost in the region.

The real issue of development is power. That is the fundamental question and always has been. Development is fundamentally about the creation, control, and distribution of capital. The real solution is that those that do not have it must get it. Without power, you cannot negotiate for lost capital transfers necessary for the rebuilding of community life.

I suggest the following strategy. We must create a critical mass in cities and urban areas. These are large organizational efforts primarily rooted in the church, in congregations, and parishes because in most of our communities those are the only institutions there, where organized people and money can be put together and where values exist that can sustain an effort over a long period of time. Why a critical mass? Without a critical mass you do not transform places and if we are about "economic development" then we must be about the transformation of the lives of people and places -- where they live and where they work. The critical mass is necessary to generate the kind of power to organize and sustain a long term redistribution or reorganization of wealth and capital flows.

The second element of critical mass is that it must be big enough to transform a place. To turn it, to re-do it. In effect, to recreate something that is possible and that can sustain itself. That is not easy to do, and it cannot be done by a church, an organization, or a development strategy.

## **People Impact**

The key to development is what happens to people. Unless one can document qualitative and quantitative changes in the lives of people, all programs and proposals for change or development are suspect and should be seen as such.

The first question must always be: What is going to happen to the lives of people in that process? For example, if there is a choice between giving money to entrepreneurs to develop five new small businesses that will employ twenty people or bringing in a couple of big manufacturing, mixed-use kinds of operations that can provide 500 to 1,000 jobs paying \$8.50 per hour with benefits and mobility, which option do we take? I would argue for the latter because that would have the greatest impact on the greatest number of people and that process will generate its own entrepreneurial talent and opportunities. More often than not we do not take that into account when we talk about development.

## **Project Control**

Another key question is that of ownership. That is, what percent of the capital resources required in this sort of re-do-it place, belongs to the local community, or what local base is being committed to the project? I would argue that if you do not put any money into the project, you do not own it, and that it is absolutely essential to have control of projects. The local people must be able to raise their own resources to sustain their involvement. I would argue further that the poorest communities in this country can do that.

It is a myth to believe that because a community is "poor," it cannot organize resources for projects in the community. Without money you cannot control, plan, or contribute effectively to the development patterns that begin to take place. Project control is absolutely necessary.

Let me give you some examples of locally controlled projects that I have helped to organize. In these examples, project control and critical mass are very important.

In Brooklyn, New York, our organization is called East Brooklyn Congregations and it is made up of approximately fifty congregations -- Black, Hispanic, and White -- representing the different groups of people in East Brooklyn. East Brooklyn is one of the most devastated parts of New York City, along with the South Bronx. Our organization has built, in the last three years, 2,100 houses for families whose incomes are as little as \$16,000 per year. The houses have three bedrooms, off-street parking, a finished basement and a backyard.

The value for such a house is \$175,000 in New York. We sell them for \$47,000. This program is called the National Nehemiah Strategy. It rebuilt an entire community from the ground up. Seventy-five percent of the people who got jobs were Black and Hispanic. The jobs were in the building sector. A school was saved and re-done, and transportation systems were re-introduced. All of those things happened as a result of building 2,100 houses in one part of a town.

We could have built 5,000 by now, but the city of New York has been so embarrassed by this project that they refuse to give us any more land for more homes. The political battle has been mobilizing thousands of people to fight and demand for more land from the city of New York, so that the project can be undertaken in other parts of the city.

There are 300 acres of vacant land in Queens, New York, that have been fallow for 25 years, but the city refused us the land. They do not want to see Nehemiah built in Queens, New York, for poor, working-class families. Mayor David Dinkins has denied us the land. On the contrary, one would expect encouragement from a black mayor rather than objection.

The project was made possible because the East Brooklyn Community, raised \$8,500,000 of its own money for a no-interest revolving loan fund for construction. How did these poor folk raise \$8,500,000? Their judicatories and Church bodies raised the money. The Baptists raise \$100,000 of their own money; the Roman Catholic Church raised \$4,500,000; the Episcopal Church raised \$1,500,000; the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church raised another \$1,000,000. They did not go to the city and the state begging for resources. They went with power and dignity and said, "We expect you to use our tax dollars to help rebuild a part of this city." The scope was so large that the impact was felt immediately.

Nehemiah has been so successful that it has now been duplicated in parts of Baltimore where thousands of homeowners are beginning to get housing for the first time in their lives. These are individuals with incomes as low as \$11,000 per year. Nationally a minor housing act was passed by the Reagan Administration, which was the only new housing legislation passed during the eight years of Reagan's Presidency. This bill was passed because nobody could deny that Nehemiah was the most successful single-family housing program in the United States. That was done because of power and vision first, not because of people thinking we needed housing. It is not a housing program, it is a program for the transformation and the renewal of a place. This is what was necessary and needed.

The second example is in Baltimore, Maryland, with Build Organization, which consists of 47 predominantly Black congregations. Its success has been in developing what is called the Baltimore Commonwealth Agreement. It is an agreement which today guarantees the opportunity of a job or college for every high school graduate in the city of Baltimore. That means if your son or daughter is admitted to Yale University or Stanford, money will not be an object.

There are 150 companies that agreed to provide employment for every high school student who graduates but does not go on to college. Ninety eight percent of the students who have graduated in the last two years who have met the criteria have been placed in college or in jobs. For the first time in a decade, the number of minority students going to college in Maryland has increased significantly as a result of that organizing effort.

All of this began with the power base, not the program. I would argue that we often tend to think of a program as preceding the power base. I suggest that power must always precede the program, because how much power you can generate determines how many programs you can implement. If you have one little neighborhood organization, you are going to get one little neighborhood kind of program. If you have got 50 or 60 congregations who are organized, disciplined, with strategies and plans, they can leverage a great deal more than a lone organization. The energy that it takes you to get the bureaucracy of a state and local government to work for one house to be done, for one job to be created in the neighborhood, that same energy can be used to fight for 1,000 jobs or 1,000 houses. The only mistake we make is to constantly think small in this arena.

A third example is our organization in San Antonio, Texas, called COPS. This Hispanic organization has resulted in one billion dollars of investment being put back into the poor, working-class barrios of San Antonio over the past 15 years. The money has gone into roads, sewers, etc., and the rebuilding of the infrastructure of that community.

We just signed an agreement in Memphis, Tennessee, with corporate leaders who will commit to that city -- which has always seen itself as a city committed to low wage and low educated workers -- to let every Memphisan have the opportunity of a job making at least \$16,000 per year, with benefits and a career ladder, by 1996. These are things that have been accomplished because of the elements I have outlined.

## **Need for Vision**

What is the sense in getting up in the morning and telling people to fight for something when they know there is no chance that there is going to be any transformation? Why tell people that if you wait about 50 years, a few of these businesses that we have will have had a chance to grow and there might be some jobs paying you \$6.00 an hour? If people act and feel powerless it is because we do not provide a large enough vision for them to risk and to act. If the vision is small the claim of people will be small. If the vision is larger, with the potential for them to own it and take a piece of it, then the possibilities are larger and the chances of success are great.

In closing, I would like to challenge you to think differently about development. If you are talking about real development, it must be the real transformation of places. I would suggest that you think about how you can create a critical mass in your communities that can transform those places. If that means you have to be engaged in struggle and fights and what-not with government, then so be it. The lives of people are at stake here, not some theoretical, academic discourse in discussion. I am an organizer who has committed himself to the transformation of society, not to simply sustaining what we see, because that is not enough. It is not enough for what is happening to too many people and families in this country today. Let's continue doing what we have to do.

## **Discussion**

Forum participants were interested in the general rules, obligations, and obstacles facing communities attempting to organize for change. Taylor noted that, while the success of the Nehemiah Project in different cities depends on certain organizational strategies that are universal, modifications are often necessary because each city is different. For example, Baltimore does not have the vacant land that we find in Brooklyn, New York or in New York City.

Taylor also pointed out that the obstacles facing communities are often magnified by the smallness of the community organization. Undertaking larger scale projects eliminates some of the obstacles because the resource base is bigger. The lack of resources has led to the loss of whole communities and cities. Size should not be limited. The organization could be city-wide or metropolitan-wide.

Forum participants concurred with Taylor's emphasis on the need to empower people. Taylor reiterated that all community organizations need a power base, whether in East Brooklyn, Queens, N.Y.C., Memphis, or Minneapolis and St. Paul. This power base must be large.



Taylor added that the individual efforts of churches -- for example, Lawndale Community Church in Chicago -- have got to be made collective efforts. The Nehemiah effort, for example, began in church with somebody preaching from the Book of Nehemiah, calling for a larger vision.

## **SUMMARY OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION ON COMMUNITY PROJECTS**

Forum participants met in small groups to discuss and share information about their own and other community projects. They examined community-church relations by addressing the following questions:

- ◆ What constitutes a viable church/community partnership?
- ◆ How are these partnership formed? Who takes the lead?
- ◆ Why should a church or a community consider becoming partners in a community development venture?
- ◆ How do these partnership relationships affect the church's mission?
- ◆ What kinds of churches are the most likely candidate for community partnership?
- ◆ Are there some unique characteristics of churches and communities that may facilitate or impede partnership development?

### **Resources**

On the one hand, community development corporations (CDCs) have technical expertise and knowledge of the political landscape that are necessary to overcome obstacles that could appear insurmountable to the uninitiated. On the other hand, churches are good at organizing and turning out people for meetings, keeping track of appointments, identifying interested congregants and providing moral support. Churches can turn out the people who will go lobby the politicians.

As mentioned above, Lawndale Community Church and the churches involved in the Linwood project in Kansas City had an established population base -- their congregations -- and the ability to attract additional participants to add to this support base. These churches and their members also had a collective resource base of skills, as well as endurance, commitment, and vision, that could be used to support community development activities.

### **Respective Roles**

Small group discussions focused on politicization, consistency, expertise, and restraint.

The church was viewed as bringing a politicized theology to the community. This was considered a proactive posture that seeks reform, not maintenance of the status quo. The church has the population base and means to "bring people in" to different programs. However, discussants noted that care must be taken to insure that the church doesn't appear to have all the resources needed for success because it can create the impression that they don't need help. Participants have found that the church has to exercise restraint in terms of what resources it can share while being consistent with its values in terms of its approach, its reliability, and its mission. The church still must be seen as "doing the Lord's work."

The community at large and, in particular, CDCs have the expertise needed to assist and promote change through navigation of bureaucratic byways that could easily hinder or halt a project's forward momentum. Communities have to understand that they cannot expect the church to do everything related to resource development and management if they are seeking a viable partnership with a CDC or community-based organization. Viable community and church partnerships grow out of a clear and shared vision for the community, and shared leadership.

### **Changing Perceptions of the Church**

When communities and congregations see that churches care about them, they become involved. One participant gave an example of how the churches in one Chicago neighborhood came together with the residents of that community to protest the development of a new stadium in their neighborhood. This stadium would have meant the displacement of the neighborhood's elderly and seven of its churches. The community and the church congregations began to witness and to bond to the commonality of needs, experiences, and visions that resulted from this threat. The end result was that the stadium project was halted. Forum participants agreed that, "Where it works, churches (congregations), people (community), pastors, everyone changes." The empowerment and sense of pride "keeps people coming back."

### **Trust**

Each partner has to be willing to disclose their own self-interests and hidden agendas in order for trust to be established. For many churches, the pastor and the constituents view community development as a moderate or extreme extension of their mission concerning human need and Christian fellowship.

## **Conflict Resolution**

A great deal of discussion dealt with the conflicts that arise between and within the community and the church. These conflicts raised the following issues:

- 1) Churches prefer to use a Christian perspective and approach to conflict resolution. Such an orientation seeks an appropriate and effective methodology that respects differences and seeks a win/win outcome.
- 2) The unmet needs of each partner must be disclosed.
- 3) Churches may experience serious internal conflict between those who want to maintain an internal ministry (focusing mostly on congregant needs) and those who seek an outreach proactive community oriented ministry for the church. This conflict must be resolved if the church's role in a partnership is to be effective.
- 4) One means of reducing potential conflict among participants is to determine the unmet needs of the community and the agendas of the special interest groups that may have their own plans for meeting those needs. Lines of communication can be open with those group seeking ways for collaborating on community issues and programs.

## **Conclusions**

Participants were unanimous in their praise of and optimism about church/community partnerships in community economic development initiatives. However, participants tended to agree that two requirements must be met in order for such partnerships to be successful. First, the community's needs must be recognized. Awareness of community needs is best developed through community input.

Second, participants must recognize the limits within which the church can exercise a cooperative ministry. Churches are not always on the same timelines as community-based organizations or CDCs in pursuing a development initiative. Development is not the primary business of churches, whereas it is the "life line" for development organizations. Churches and CDCs must reach a consensus on how they can mutually approach their respective goals within the context of their missions.

Participants concluded that churches could become "living witnesses" to the connections to be made and the opportunities to be realized if the partnership building is done well. The main beneficiary in such partnerships would be the community. Communities could draw from these strengthened institutions to help analyze and develop solutions to a wide-range of community problems.

## **FORUM SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this forum and consultation was to share the experiences of churches and community-based organizations engaged in community development activities with forum participants in order to stimulate interest and awareness in the role that community/church partnerships can play in neighborhood revitalization.

All forum presentations, including small group discussions, treated the church as a key player in planning and developing strategies for neighborhood revitalization program initiatives. Churches are capable of playing a variety of roles in any community revitalization process. The specific role may be subject to negotiation with potential partners from among community institutions and citizens, foundations, nonprofit development organizations, business, and government. Roles that may be considered for churches include providers of capital and human resources, co-developers or partners in development ventures, initiators or lead developers in neighborhood ventures, and organizers or catalysts for major development activities.

Churches and community partners may use different models and strategies to pursue their neighborhood revitalization program initiatives. In some communities, the model is a coalition of congregations joining forces with community-based organizations, using an advocacy strategy to achieve the community's revitalization objectives. In other communities, lone congregations may work with community development corporations (CDC) to meet the neighborhood's community development needs. In still other communities, a coalition of congregations may join forces with a CDC to undertake a community economic development initiative.

On the one hand, Forum participants made a persuasive argument for the CDC model of action as an answer to disenfranchisement, while at the same time arguing equally persuasively for the large scale coalition/advocacy model as an effective way to empower communities.

Both models and strategies pose important questions to be considered by individuals and groups interested in community-based development:

- ◆ Is the CDC model too representative of the economic interest of the few?
- ◆ What will happen when growth/expansion is no longer possible?
- ◆ Does professionalism, efficiency, and competition undermine community cohesion and capacity for action?
- ◆ What if there is no critical mass available for the advocacy model?

CDC-KC and the Black Ministers Union of Kansas City, and Lawndale Community Church provide examples of the roles churches and CDCs can play in community development. Certainly CDC-KC and the Black Baptist Ministers Union have achieved economic power and vision for their community.

However, as the tremendous impact of involvement by the church has shown in both models, business is only one aspect of the community that is in need of revitalization. How do the people of Linwood and Lawndale view what has taken place in their communities? More definitive responses to these questions are discussed in case studies of the Linwood/BMU-KC shopping center development and Lawndale Community Church conducted by Williams and Bakama of the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. These case studies are available through the Humphrey Institute.

**THE CHURCH AS PARTNER IN  
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:  
FORUM PARTICIPANTS**

**Presented by the Fairness and Social Justice Project  
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis**

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Sumaya Ali  
Carleton University  
51 Wyeclyffe St.  
Nepean, Ont. Canada  
(613) 225-3625

B. Bakama  
Humphrey Institute, U of M  
301 19th Avenue S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 625-8330

Bryan Barry  
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation  
919 Lafond Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(612) 642-2022

Reverend James Battle  
Mt. Oliver Church  
451 Central Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(612) 222-4763

Dr. Willa Lee Battle  
Grace Temple Deliverance Center  
1908 4th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Debbie Bonds  
Community Stabilization Project  
3216 10th Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 824-8749

Winton Boyd  
Franklin Business Center  
1433 East Franklin Ave., Ste. 3A  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
(612) 871-8980

Willis Bright  
The Lilly Endowment  
2801 Meridian Street  
Indianapolis, IN  
(317) 924-5471

Ralph Bruins  
Park Ave. Urban Program and  
Leadership Foundation  
3400 Park Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 825-5884

Dr. Yvonne Cheek  
Humphrey Institute, U of M  
301 19th Avenue S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 625-6668

Jackie Cherryhomes  
Minneapolis City Council Member  
350 S. 5th Street, Rm. 307  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
(612) 673-2205

Reverend Robert Clemetson  
Council on Foundations  
1828 L Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 466-6512

Charlene Cole  
Pilot City Regional Center  
1315 Penn Ave. N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55411  
(612) 348-4747

Reverend Richard H. Coleman  
St. Peter's AME Church  
401 East 41st Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55409  
(612) 825-9750

James Cook  
Sabathani Community Center  
310 E. 38th  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 824-2669

Victoria Davis  
BNV Properties  
St. Paul, MN

Vincent Delusia  
2755 Colfax Avenue S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55408

David Doig  
Lawndale Christian Development  
Corporation  
3848 W. Ogden Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60623  
(312) 762-6389

Ed Duren  
Public Affairs Consultant  
2481 Galtier Cir.  
Roseville, MN 55113

Robert E. Engstrom  
Robert Engstrom Companies  
5968 Grass Lake Terr.  
Minneapolis, MN 55419  
(612) 869-8743

W. Arthur Erickson  
Park Ave. Methodist Church  
3400 Park Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
(612) 822-6580

Charles Fenrick  
5140 W. 7th St., No. 10  
Winona, MN 55987  
(612) 454-5140

Ken Foxworth  
Minneapolis Park & Recreation Bd.  
841 Angus  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(612) 348-2226

Bishop Stanley N. Frazier  
Emmanuel Church  
6101 Clinton Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55419  
(612) 724-6701

Reverend Kathleen Gatson  
Pilgrim Baptist Church  
732 W. Central  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(612) 227-3320

Reverend Wayne Gordon  
Lawndale Community Church  
3848 W. Ogden Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60623  
(312) 762-6389

Jeff Gorfine  
Olmsted Community Action Program  
1421 S.E. 3rd Ave.  
Rochester, MN 55904  
(507) 285-8785

Florita B. Griffin  
P.O. Box O  
College Station, TX 77841  
(409) 361-3868



Nora Hall  
Leadership for Black Women  
Humphrey Center, U of M  
301 19th Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 227-1263

Bernard Handy  
Quitman County Development Org.  
Rt. 2 Box 205  
Sledge, MS 38670  
(601) 382-7104

Reverend Wallace Hartsfield  
Metropolitan MB Church  
2310 E. Linwood Blvd.  
Kansas City, MO 64128  
(816) 923-3689

Reverend Curtis Herron  
Zion Baptist Church  
621 Elwood Avenue North  
Minneapolis, MN 55411  
(612) 377-5436

Garry Hesser  
Augsburg College  
731 21st Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
(612) 330-1000

Sandra Hillary  
Minneapolis City Council  
301 City Hall  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Arthur Himmelman  
The Himmelman Consulting Group  
1406 West Lake  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
(612) 824-5507

Robert L. Jackson  
Quitman County Development Corp.  
P.O. Box 386  
Marks, MS 38646  
(601) 326-4000

Lisa Jones  
Humphrey Institute, U of M  
301 19th Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 625-6847

Sumner Jones  
Mpls. Spokesman Newspaper  
3744 4th Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55409  
(612) 827-4021

Molly Kurtz  
7520 Cahill Rd.  
Edina, MN 55439

Jan Laskey  
Powderhorn Residents Group  
2951 Chicago Ave.  
Minneapolis, MN 55102  
(612) 827-5527

Jim Maurer  
Church of St. Joan of Arc  
4537 3rd Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
(612) 825-8205

Donald Maxwell  
Community Development Corp. of  
Kansas City  
2420 E. Linwood Blvd., Ste. 400  
Kansas City, MO 64109  
(816) 924-5400

Steven Mayer  
Rainbow Research, Inc.  
1406 W. Lake St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
(612) 824-0724

Winston C. McDowell  
1900 3rd Avenue South, #24  
Minneapolis, MN 55404  
(612) 871-0784

Reverend Devin Miller  
Pilgrim Baptist Church  
732 W. Central  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
(612) 227-3320

Reverend Earl Miller  
Pilgrim Baptist Church  
732 Central Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55102  
(612) 227-3220

Victoria L. Miller  
The Himmelman Consulting Group  
1406 West Lake  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
(612) 824-5507

Linda Murtfeldt  
Presbytery of the Twin Cities  
17099 Dodd Blvd.  
Farmington, MN 55024  
(612) 332-3372

Joe Nathan  
Humphrey Institute, U of M  
301 19th Avenue S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 625-3506

Sam Powers  
Minneapolis Public Housing  
Authority  
1001 Washington Ave. N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 342-1455

Reverend Diane Sadravi  
Prince of Glory Lutheran Ch.  
430 Bryant Avenue N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55405

David Scheie  
Rainbow Research, Inc.  
1406 W. Lake St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
(612) 824-0724

Stephen Seidel  
Twin Cities Habitat for Hum.  
2720 East 22nd St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55406  
(612) 332-3372

Joe Selvaggio  
Executive Director  
Project For Pride in Living  
2516 Chicago Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN. 55404

Verna Simmons  
Junior Achievement  
3939 West 69th Street  
Edina, MN 55429  
(612) 927-8354

Fred Smith  
Humphrey Institute, U of M  
301 19th Avenue S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 625-1551

Ron Smith  
Executive Director  
CNIA  
310 East 38th  
Minneapolis, MN 55409  
(612) 822-3302

Reverend William Smith  
African American Wellspring  
Mission  
P.O. Box 2476  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Randolph Staten  
African American Children &  
Family Institute  
1423 Penn Ave. N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55411  
(612) 521-4914

Dale Stuepfert  
56 Sheridan Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55405  
(612) 379-4049

Gerald Taylor  
Industrial Area Foundation  
491 East McLemore  
Memphis, TN 38106  
(901) 946-3786

T. Williams  
Humphrey Institute, U of M  
301 19th Avenue S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 824-0724

Sherman P. Toy  
1204 Harmon Place Apt. 17  
Minneapolis, MN 55403  
(612) 332-2954

Owen Turnlund  
Plymouth Christian Youth Ctr.  
2301 Oliver Ave. N.  
Minneapolis, MN 55411  
(612) 522-6501

Reverend Albert D. Tyson, III  
St. Stephen African Methodist  
Episcopal Church  
2000 West Washington Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60612  
(312) 666-4164

John P. Villerius  
3519 Harriet Ave. S., Apt. 4  
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Byron P. White  
Christ Emmanuel Christian  
Fellowship  
3515 Trimble Ave.  
Cinti, OH 45207  
(513) 731-9841

Reverend Oliver White  
585 Fuller Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55103  
(612) 224-0341

Professor Oliver Williams  
400 Ford Hall  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
(612) 624-0873

